

Boogie Woogie Piano

by H. Michael Sanders

for Jimmy Yancey and Big Joe Duskin,

Oh! I hear those ivories thumping and rumbling,
 twisting and tinkling up and down the keyboard
 at the end of long, talented fingers.
 Rolling percussive rhythm driven by the tenacious
 repetition of the persistent left-hand of God.
 Bell-clear serpentine melodies skittering across the
 surface of the throbbing beat and heeding the
 ancient and primal call of the righteous blues.
 Spare, inventive, blunt and direct, born for house
 parties and dancing on old worn out, out-of-tune
 and otherwise impaired upright pianos.

A-Flat Dreaming through a Bear Cat Crawl.
Slim Slam Boogie at 35th and Dearborn.
Beat Me Daddy Eight to the Bar with Pinetop's Boogie Woogie.
Shave 'Em Dry and Make Me a Pallet on the Floor.
Yancey's Special, Sweet Patootie, Cincinnati Stomp.
Roll 'Em Pete and Shout for Joy for a Boogie Woogie Prayer.

I sense those magic digits moving up and down my spine,
 a rollicking eight-to-the-bar boogie woogie rhythm,
 tingly, jingly purebred blues piano prowess.
 Those fingers striding along the keys with a touching
 simplicity possessing inherent grace and power.
 Fingers tickling my twisting vertebrae as if they were,
 in fact, those eighty-eight bony keys on the
 upright piano jangling loose over the rhythm.
 Walking bass, stomping their feet, barrelhouse
 bounce that sends me reeling every time I
 hear the thumping hammers on the strings.

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